

Sermon Outline

“The Mustard Seed and the Leaven” – Parables, Part 4 – Matthew 13:31- 35 – Mark Mitchell– December 1, 2013

Main Idea: The kingdom of heaven is marked by astonishing growth and unchecked influence, according to God’s unfailing plan.

Introduction

1. The first parable in our series, the parable of the sower, reveals that *the message of the kingdom* will yield varied responses, some that are acceptable and many that are not.
2. The second and third parables, the parable of the weeds and net, make clear that in *the present experience of the kingdom* believers and unbelievers will continue together until the final judgment separates them.
3. This brings us to the final two parables directed to the crowds.

The Kingdom of Heaven is Marked by Astonishing Growth

1. The mustard seed is extremely small. And yet it can grow to between 6-12 feet tall. Jesus is not giving a biology lesson. The point he is making has to do with its astonishing growth from an extremely small seed to a plant that far surpasses all others in a garden.
2. The point of the parable is that just as the tiny beginnings of a mustard seed unexpectedly grows to produce a tree, so also the kingdom of heaven, from exceedingly small beginnings, will likewise grow beyond all expectation.
3. Consider the beginnings of Christianity: Jesus came as a baby to a peasant family in the insignificant nation of Israel. His 12 disciples were unimpressive and mostly uneducated. A small and unimpressive beginning. But astonishing growth has happen over the last two centuries. Those who profess Christianity make up 1/3rd of the world’s population.
4. One day, people from every tribe, tongue and nation will worship at his throne (Rev. 5:9).

The Kingdom of Heaven is Marked by Unchecked Influence

1. In the second parable, the kingdom of heaven is compared to leaven or yeast. Here we have a woman who is preparing to bake bread. She takes the leaven and hides it in a large batch of flour, the equivalent of about 50-60 pounds worth, enough to feed a small village. And the leaven works its way through the entire batch of flour.
2. Jesus’ point is that the influence of the kingdom of heaven is pervasive. It’s influence is unchecked or unhindered, having widespread effect.
3. The gospel affects every aspect of our lives – taken from death to life, from worldly passions to new affections and desires for God, his Word and his people.
4. The gospel transforms every sphere of our lives – in our relationships, in our homes and in the workplace.
5. The gospel transforms how we live in community – from serving one another to how we function in the marketplace to taking a stand against the moral injustices in our culture.

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The Kingdom Advances According to God's Plan

1. In verse 35, Matthew tells us that Jesus taught in parables as a fulfillment of prophetic Scripture. He revealed truths about his kingdom, hidden since the foundation of the world.
2. This message calls us to both hard work and humility. Just because something is true doesn't mean it will be easy to understand. The kingdom of heaven is of priceless value. But its truths are hidden, revealed only to those who are willing to apply themselves and humble themselves.
3. This message calls for our patience. The world around us is getting darker and darker. These parables remind us that what we see is not the whole story. God is not discouraged. He is not worried or fretting with anxiety. He is reigning confidently on his throne because this is the nature of his kingdom on earth.

Fellowship Starters

1. Take time as a group to read Matthew 13:31-35.
2. How have you seen the seeds of the gospel continue to grow – in your life and the lives of those you know?
3. How does the influence of the gospel engender your patience and faith that the seeds you have planted in unbelievers' lives may yet bear fruit?
4. How has the pervasive influence of the gospel affected your life, your relationships, your work and your worldview? Where does the gospel's influence still need to grow in your life?
5. Why do these parables call us to humility and hard work in searching out and applying the truths of the gospel?
6. In a world that is growing increasingly darker and hostile to Christianity, how does the astonishing growth and influence of the gospel encourage your faith?